

REDUCING STUDENT DISTRESS AND USE OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT POLICY

Minimising Physical Restraint

As required by the Education and Training Act 2020 and in support of the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP), Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School promotes a schoolwide culture of wellbeing to ensure the school is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff. This includes understanding, recognising, and safely responding to student distress and minimising the use of physical restraint.

The physical restraint rules set out in this policy comply with the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules and the framework for physical restraint set out by the Education and Training Act 2020 (s. 101).

This policy aligns with Ministry of Education physical restraint rules and guidelines but this information does not equate to the training required to safely use physical restraint. Staff must be authorised and complete approved training modules to be able to use physical restraint at Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School.

How we define and use physical restraint at Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School

What is physical restraint?

Physical restraint, in the context of this policy, means to use physical force to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of a student (or any part of their body) against their will.

In line with Ministry of Education Guidelines, ([Aramai He Tētēkura: A guide to understanding distress and minimising the use of physical restraint](#)) teachers and authorised staff are provided with training to understand the physical restraint guidelines and take further approved training modules in identifying stress triggers, understanding unmet needs, and preventing, minimising, and responding to student distress.

Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School does not allow seclusion or unsafe physical restraint in response to student distress.

Seclusion

Seclusion is prohibited under the Education and Training Act 2020 (s. 98) and is defined as putting a student alone in a room or space against their will, which they cannot (or think they cannot) leave.

Unsafe physical restraint

We do not use unsafe physical restraint techniques under any circumstances. Unsafe physical restraint techniques include:

- restraint that restricts breathing or communicating, including speaking and sign language
- face-down restraint
- immobilising through pressure points and pain holds
- actions such as tackling, sitting, lying on, or kneeling on a person
- headlocks or putting pressure on the chest or neck
- bending joints backwards.

When can physical restraint be used?

The first response by staff at Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School is to de-escalate any student behaviour that threatens the wellbeing of themselves or others.

Teachers or authorised staff members may only use physical restraint if all three of these conditions are met, and only as a last resort.

1. If physical restraint is necessary to prevent imminent harm, including significant emotional distress to a student or another person.
2. If the teacher or authorised staff member reasonably believes there is no other option available in the circumstances for preventing harm.
3. If the physical restraint is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. This means only applying as much force as is necessary, and for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School staff take proactive steps to ensure student safety. This may include using physical restraint to prevent harm, for example to stop a student from running onto a road, or coming into contact with a hazardous item.

Physical restraint rules

Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School complies with the following requirements, as set out by the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules. References are provided for how each area relates to an associated rule.

Policy requirements and availability to the community

We fulfil the requirement to have policies on reducing student distress and the use of physical restraint, and a process for managing complaints (Rule 4). Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School manages all complaints, including those regarding physical restraint, through our concerns and complaints policy. Where necessary, we follow up complaints with the Teaching Council, in accordance with their conduct and competence processes.

Our policies on reducing student distress and the use of physical restraint are available to the school community, and we are able to provide the names and positions of any staff members who are authorised to use physical restraint, if requested (Rule 6).

Authorisation of staff members

Under the Education and Training Act 2020, teachers, including relief teachers and people with a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT), are automatically authorised to use physical restraint. Other staff members, such as teacher aides, must be authorised by the board (Rule 5).

Process for authorisation

1. The board may authorise a staff member who is not a teacher to use physical restraint after they have completed physical restraint training as set out by Rule 12.
2. The board makes any authorisation as specified above in writing.
3. The staff member receives a copy of the authorisation.
4. The board may revoke an authorisation at any time in writing.

Individual support plans

We have individual support plans in place for specific students to prevent distress and de-escalate crisis situations.

We ensure we have support plans for students who meet any of the following criteria:

- the student is highly likely to be involved in a situation where physical restraint may be used
- the student has been physical restrained more than once in a term
- a support plan is requested for a student by their parents/caregivers.

We do not include physical restraint in an individual support plan unless all other possible strategies

have been explored. Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School requires informed consent from parents/caregivers and whānau if physical restraint is included in a support plan (Rule 8).

We monitor the frequency of physical restraint with the intention to minimise and, where possible, eliminate its use. The school notifies the Ministry of Education if physical restraint is part of a support plan.

Notifying the use of physical restraint

After a situation involving physical restraint, we notify the following parties (Rule 9):

- Staff inform the principal (or their delegate) as soon as possible in order to support students, other staff, and anyone affected by the situation.
- The school notifies parents/caregivers as soon as possible after physical restraint has been used (at minimum before the student is returned to their care). Parents/Caregivers are provided with a reasonable opportunity to actively participate in a debrief about the incident, including how it was managed with regard to the guidelines, within three working days of the incident (or later by mutual agreement).
- The school notifies the Ministry of Education through the online incident reporting form or our student management system. We keep a secure copy of the notification, in line with the Privacy Act 2020 and the Official Information Act 1982.
- The principal reports the use of physical restraint and analysis of physical restraint trends to the board.

If the principal considers that use of physical restraint was unjustified, they are responsible for following up with the board and subsequent reporting to the Teaching Council.

Recording and monitoring physical restraint

Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School monitors our use of physical restraint, and complies with record keeping requirements. We keep written records of every instance of physical restraint of a student. We keep records for a minimum of 10 years from the date of last action (Rule 7).

We take reasonable steps to ensure that any student who has been physically restrained and any staff member who has used physical restraint has their physical and psychological wellbeing monitored, so that appropriate support can be provided if there are adverse effects from the use of physical restraint.

We check for trends by monitoring and analysing records, particularly the increased use of physical restraint. If the trend shows increased use, we consider how to minimise use of restraint (Rule 10).

Reporting physical restraint

We report every incident of physical restraint to the Ministry of Education using their online form, through our student management system, or by completing the Information for the Ministry of Education and School Board online reporting form.

Every staff member who uses physical restraint completes a staff physical restraint incident report. We keep a copy of the form in the student file, and provide a copy to parents/caregivers of the student (Rule 11).

Staff training and support

The board is responsible for ensuring (Rule 12):

- from 7 February 2024, teachers and authorised staff members have completed the online learning module about the physical restraint guidelines (Aramai He Tētēkura)
- from 7 February 2025, teachers and authorised staff members are supported and trained in identifying stress triggers, understanding unmet needs, and preventing, minimising, and responding to student distress
- teachers with a high likelihood of needing to use physical restraint are trained in appropriate physical holds by accredited physical restraint practitioners
- every authorised staff member (who is not a teacher) has been trained in appropriate physical holds by accredited physical restraint practitioners before their authorisation.

The principal assures the board that all procedures relating to physical restraint have been followed, and that all requirements to notify, monitor, and report have been met. The principal confirms that any non-teaching staff have been authorised in writing, and that staff authorised to apply restraint have received appropriate training and support.

Legislation

- Education and Training Act 2020
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Privacy Act 2020
- Official Information Act 1982

Links to other policies:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Bullying Prevention and Response Policy
- Child protection Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Drug Policy
- Inclusive education Policy
- Privacy of Information Policy
- Protected Disclosure Policy
- Traumatic Incidents Policy

Appendix A

Post-incident Procedures and Reporting templates for physical restraint

Instructions

1. Attach the debriefing forms and any other relevant form (eg, Injury Form) to the Physical Restraint Incident Form.
 2. Place copies of these forms in the student's file. Make the copied forms available to the student's teacher/s and the student's parents or caregivers.
 3. Share data on physical restraint incidents with the Board of Trustees via the Principal's report. Only share this data in a session that excludes the public.
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1. Physical restraint incident report (staff)

- The staff involved in restraining the student should complete this as soon as possible and within 24 hours.
- The incident report should be signed off by the staff involved, any staff who witnessed the incident, and the Principal or Principal's delegate.

Note: *If the Principal applied the restraint, a delegated senior management team member should sign off the report.*

2. Physical restraint debriefing form (staff)

- Within two days of the incident, a debriefing with the staff involved should be held by the Principal or Principal's delegate. Another member of staff who was not involved in the restraint should attend.
- If a behaviour specialist from the Ministry or RTLB service is supporting the student's team, they should be part of the debriefing process.

Notes: *The Principal is responsible for facilitating the debriefing unless they are the person who applied the physical restraint. If this is the case, a suitable senior leader in the school should take this role. If police have been involved they should be invited to the staff debriefing too.*

3. Physical restraint debriefing (parents or caregivers and, if appropriate, the student)

- The parents or caregivers should be notified and involved in discussion about the incident with the Principal or Principal's delegate as soon as possible so they can monitor their child's physical and emotional wellbeing at home.
- The parents or caregivers should be given the opportunity to discuss the incident and invited to become active partners in exploring alternatives to restraint.

Note: *The staff member who applied the physical restraint should not be part of this meeting.*

Physical restraint incident report

Report completed by		Date of incident	
		Date of report	
Name of student			
Date of birth		Gender M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>	
Ethnicity			
Time restraint started			
Time restraint ended			
Name/s of staff member/s administering restraint			
Trained in safe physical restraint?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Other staff /adults who witnessed			

Place where restraint occurred	
Classroom	
Te Kapua o Ngā Rangī	
Assembly hall	
Outdoor area	
Toilet block	
Administration area	
Other (identify)	

Behaviour directed at	
Staff member – name	
Student – name	
Self – describe how they intended self-harm	
Property – describe potential injury to self or others	

Reason restraint was considered necessary	
Imminent danger, serious risk of injury – describe	
Actual injury – describe and attach injury form	

Staff are invited to use the following reflection page if they feel this will assist with their debrief. This is optional.

Reflection

Events leading to the incident

Describe what was happening before the behaviour started to escalate. What was the student doing? What do you think might have triggered the behaviour? How were other students reacting to the student?

Behaviour of the student

What did you notice about the student's behaviour that alerted you that they were struggling to cope? Think about the way they looked, for example facial expressions, physical signs, language.

What did you try before the restraint?

Describe the alternative techniques and interventions tried to prevent the emergency, including a description of the de-escalation strategies you used. What was the response from the student?

The restraint method used

Describe the nature of the physical restraint. Include the type of hold and number of people required.

Monitoring

Describe how the student's physical and emotional distress was monitored while they were restrained.

After the restraint ended

Describe the mood of the student following the restraint. What help and support were they offered?

If there's a next time

What could be done differently in the future to prevent the need for restraint?

How about you?

How are you feeling and what support do you need?

Signature of person who applied the restraint Signatures of any staff witness

form for staff involved in physical restraint incident

Date of incident	
Date of debriefing	Time of debriefing
Names of the people at the debriefing	
Findings of debriefing	
Next steps/actions	
Principal or Principal's delegate signature	

Physical restraint debriefing form – parents or caregivers, student

Date of incident		
Date of debriefing		Time of debriefing
Names of the people at the debriefing		
Findings of debriefing		
Parent or caregiver – comments and suggestions		
Student – comments and suggestions		
Next steps/actions agreed		
Signatures		
Principal or Principal's delegate:		
Parents or caregivers:		
Student:		

Appendix B

Physical Restraint Authorisation for Non-Teaching Staff

The Ōtūmoetai Intermediate School Board of Trustees authorises the below named non-teaching staff member to apply physical restraint in accordance with Rule 5 of the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules 2023 and the framework for physical restraint set out by the Education and Training Act 2020 (s. 101).

Name:	
Role:	
Conditions attached to this authorisation	
Declaration	<p>I _____ confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Principal (or delegated authority) has shared and explained the Physical Restraint Policy, guidelines and procedures with me ● I understand the policy, guidelines and procedures, and agree to adhere to them should I become involved in an incident requiring me to use physical restraint <p>Signed:</p> <p>Date:</p>
Signed on behalf of BOT:	<p>-----</p> <p>Chairperson Date:</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Principal (or delegated authority) Date:</p>